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A PUBLICATION OF THE SC STATE BUDGET & CONTROL BOARD  
OFFICE OF GENERAL SERVICES, STATE FLEET MANAGEMENT

# Focus on Fleet

## From the State Fleet Manager

**Question:** *What does it take to start a ten-car pileup on a South Carolina highway?*

**Answer:** *Three snowflakes.*

At the beginning of January, Columbia experienced several inches of snow. What's more, it stuck to the ground, and it closed us down here at State Government for a couple of days.

That said, it was a unique experience for us because we don't see much snow down here — at least not the sticking kind. As a result, few of our fellow South Carolinians

have any experience at driving in snow, and the accident reports came in fast and furious. Fortunately, most people had the good sense to stay home once the snow came down.

This issue of *Focus on Fleet* was originally set for publication in February, but our editor has had some delays caused by the publication of the annual *Motor Vehicle Management Review*, some surgery, and a long visit to the Federal Courthouse as a juror. Therefore this issue is shorter than usual, and the Spring issue will follow in a few weeks.

We have some interesting articles this month: profiles of Derrick Huggins, fleet manager at USC; news about AFVs; and a profile of our own Shop Supervisor, the esteemed Robert Seawright.

It doesn't seem likely we'll see any more snow this year, but you never know. They tell me the last big one fell after Easter back in 1973.

Whatever happens,

*Y'all be safe out there!*

—Gerald Calk  
State Fleet Manager

## New Tire Rotation Recommendations

In January 2002, State Fleet Management released new recommended Preventive Maintenance schedules. The PM Schedules for light vehicles (in SCEMIS, PA and PB) recommended tire rotations at 12,000- or 15,000-mile intervals. This recommendation is being changed. The rotation of tires is necessary to increase the life of the tire.

In some cases tires are replaced just before a scheduled rotation. They should still be rotated so new tires are on the front of these vehicles. A tire rotation would not be required if the vehicle had only a few thousand miles since the tire change. In recent

years, all vehicle manufacturers have recommended tire rotations at each scheduled service.

**SFM is now recommending that tires be rotated at the first PM service and every other service thereafter for vehicles one ton or less without dual wheels.** Under ideal conditions the tires should be rotated at the first service and every second service thereafter until tire replacement breaks the cycle. During a tire rotation or any time the wheels are removed from the vehicle, we recommend that the brakes be inspected for pad/shoe and rotor/drum wear. If there is any doubt the brakes will last until the next scheduled tire rotation, the required brake components should be replaced and tested.

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# Fleet Manager Profiles

## Introducing Derrick Huggins, USC Fleet Manager

Step into the parking facility office at the corner of Pendleton and Pickens Streets, and you will be greeted by a constant stream of visitors on parking and other fleet business. In one corner is the office of Derrick Huggins, Fleet Manager for the University of South Carolina.

Derrick Huggins has worked in the USC transportation office since 1985. He started out while he was still a student and became a director of Parking Services in 1994. He is originally from Heath Springs, SC, where both his parents were involved in the public education system. In 1995, he was made Director of Transportation, and in 1997 the areas of Fleet Management, Parking Services and Transportation were merged and became his responsibility.

While many fleet managers approach the business from the perspective of former mechanics or transportation officers, Derrick Huggins puts a great deal of emphasis on the environmental aspects of his position. He draws heavily on his education in biology and chemistry (BS, USC 1991) to help him assess the impact of the transportation fleet on air quality, and has also recently added a blood-borne pathogens component to the safety training for all Transportation employees.

USC uses a modified dBase computer system to track its fleet of over 400 vehicles, which about 5,000 employees and faculty share. Mr. Huggins screens drivers of these vehicles in accordance with the State Fleet Safety Program. Furthermore, the University has a very successful Accident Review Board.

Mass Transit is the focus of Mr. Huggins' approach to fleet management, particularly the buses used to move USC students around campus. As part of the Master Plan at USC, parking is being moved out of the center of campus to outlying areas. While this might cause some consternation on the part of students, the move should relieve vehicle

traffic at the center of campus and also reduce the amount of pollutants in the air from vehicle exhaust.

Mr. Huggins also oversees the motor vehicle maintenance shop at USC. This shop not only does PM work, but also complex procedures like internal engine work and transmission overhauls. Of course, University Police and Shuttle vehicles get the highest priority.

In the area of Alternative Fuel Vehicles (AFVs), Mr. Huggins is helping the University lead the way. "If you can't get a University to commit to that, it's going to be hard to get anybody to do it," he says, adding that USC will buy "all the AFVs we can afford." As an additional goal, he mentions the possibility of using CNG shuttle buses.

Finally, despite all the challenges of fleet management for an institution of higher learning, Mr. Huggins is pleased that USC is allowed to tailor its policies to suit its needs. Allowing agencies to shape their own policies fosters better overall fleet management, he says.

"I really enjoy this job," he says. "Changing the way we think about vehicles can bring about a whole new way of thinking for the South."

—Jonathan Eason

*Note: Assistant Editor Margie Valladares created the questions for this series of profiles.*

## Jason Manis, Employee of the Quarter

On 11 February 2002, **Jason Manis**, a member of the State Fleet Management Maintenance Team, was chosen as the General Services Division's **Employee of the Quarter** for the last quarter of 2001 (October through December). This award is given to employees who exemplify at least one of five specified values: Commitment; Efficiency/Initiative; Knowledge of Job (Proficiency); Reliability; and Disposition or Attitude. In the photo below, Jason is shown with **George Dorn** (L), Director of the Budget and Control Board's General Services Division.

**Bill Page**, head of the State Fleet Management Maintenance Team, characterizes Jason as having "one of the best efficiency rates of all the 300 State Employed Technicians." Using flat rate standards developed for vehicle repair, Jason charged 419.3 hours (119.6% of available hours) to work orders in the last quarter. The average efficiency rate for the Central Transportation Maintenance Facility, where Jason works, is 95.9% this fiscal year, while the average for commercial shops is only 80%.

Jason is certified by the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) as a Master Automobile Technician. While there are over 315,000 certified technicians, there are only 90,114 Master Technicians. There are relatively few in service to the State.

According to Mr. Page, Jason "gets it done, and just like the Maintenance Team motto says, he 'Makes it Happen.' Jason is an outstanding customer relations person and a pleasure to work with."

Congratulations to Jason for earning this high recognition.



# Shop Manager Profiles: Robert Seawright

Manager of State Fleet Management's Central Transportation Maintenance Facility

Probably the first thing people notice about Robert Seawright is the neatness of his appearance. Always neatly dressed, he is one of those rare people who could wear a white suit into a coal mine and not get it dirty.

That neatness is an outward sign of the order he creates in his environment: in the shop, in his office, and in his relationship with his colleagues here at State Fleet Management.

The office of State Fleet Management's Shop Manager is always orderly, reflecting his philosophy about managing the shop. He has worked for SFM since 1979. The Central Transportation Maintenance Facility (CTMF), which Mr. Seawright has supervised since 1985, supports over 900 vehicles from some 26 State agencies. The CTMF won the Outstanding Shop Award for FY2000, and the Maintenance Team won the Team of the Quarter Award for the 3rd Quarter of FY2001.

The CTMF handles a wide variety of tasks, everything from routine preventive maintenance to A/C work, transmission services, brake work, and CV joint/boot work. Other procedures such as engine or transmission replacement, major differential repairs, and front end alignments are jobbed out to commercial vendors.

On maintaining cars:

"They're like the human body. Everybody has one, and they depend on it, but most people know practically nothing about it." Just as people go to the doctor for their bodies, they send their cars to Robert to keep them running well. Robert values the trust other agencies put in him and the shop technicians. In fact, that trust puts him in a seemingly irreconcilable position: "We have to make money to stay in business, but we also have to save the customer money."

Of course, proper diagnosis is the best way to save the customer money. Robert points out that if you don't know exactly what's wrong, you might replace the wrong part, wasting time and money. Doing it right the first time is the hallmark of his approach to diagnostics.



*CTMF Shop Supervisor Robert Seawright concentrates on a problem.*

Robert also believes strongly in customer service. One way he realizes this vision is by making the CTMF "a one-stop shop." For instance, if a vehicle requires both a PM and a front-end alignment, the CTMF will perform the preventive maintenance and also arrange for the front-end alignment to be done outside, even transporting the vehicle to and from the vendor — a service few other shops offer.

While this kind of service might seem over-the-top, it saves the customer time and money. It saves money because the alignment is done at a price negotiated in advance (in fact, sometimes negotiated by Robert himself). It saves time because the vehicle is unavailable for a shorter time, and because the other agency will not have to spend labor hours arranging the repair on its own. As Robert likes to say, "Time saved is money earned."

The increasing presence of Alternative Fuel Vehicles (AFVs) in the fleet is no obstacle to Robert. "In fact, we may even get more business out of it," he says, because few commercial shops will be able to work on such vehicles, especially at first. Of course, since AFVs receive more support from the public sector, State tech-

nicians are well served to know how to work on them. These vehicles are here to stay.

Robert sees training as a vital part of maintaining the shop. He points out that most new cars being built today have about 12 computers on board. "When I first decided to go into mechanic work, I figured I would always have a job, but the mechanical aspect of it intrigues me. You have to get smarter. You can't just keep doing the same job the same way."

Since Robert has been with State Fleet so long (nearly 23 years), and since we ask everyone this question, our final question dealt with retirement. Robert's answer was this:

"Retirement is like death. Most people know they're going to die, but they don't really plan on it. I try to live every day one day at a time and do as much as I can. We are not promised tomorrow."

—Jonathan Eason

*Note: Assistant Editor Margie Valladares created the questions for this series of profiles.*

## Odds and Ends

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### Don't Forget!

SFM still has plenty of GM rebate certificates. These certificates are good for a **\$1,000 discount** on the purchase of any qualifying GM vehicle. Contact Linda Watts at (803) 737-1508 for more information.

### AFV Study in Progress

State Fleet Management is currently engaging in a study to determine the immediate state of alternative fuel and its infrastructure within South Carolina. Jeff McCormack and Amanda Londo are seeking this information by using a survey to find the densities of alternative fuel vehicles compared to the presence of alternative fuel infrastructure.

The decision has been made to extend activities to local governments, state agencies, Federal fleet concentrations, and gasoline retailers. With information gathered, SFM hopes to recommend and develop an extensive alternative fuel infrastructure plan for the state of South Carolina.

### New Fuel System Contract

State Fleet Management, with guidance from the State Fuel System Work Group, has issued a Request For Proposals (RFP) that will establish a new contract for the State Fuel System. This solicitation includes a provision for upgrading the tank monitoring systems at State owned fuel facilities. Fuel cards issued under the current contract with PS Energy, Inc. will expire at the end of July 2002. The State plans to receive new fuel credit cards by mid June 2002 and will distribute these to the end using agencies.

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